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Southwest Nebraska Community Builders Graduate Reunion Meeting May 1, 2012

Introduction:

2012 marks 20 years since Dr. Bob Manley brought Community Builder to Southwest Nebraska, as the region emerged from the devastation of the 1980's Ag Crisis. On May 1st, a group of former participants from communities through out the region came together to reflect on the impact Community Builders had on them personally, and on their communities and the region overall. Based upon this reflection it was unanimously determine that a new generation of emerging leaders would greatly benefit from Community Builders. The group then went through the process of evaluating what had been most valuable in the original program that should be retained, how the program can be improved, and how new opportunities and resources should be incorporated. The following are the priorities and opportunities identified, plus a proposed implementation outline.

Program Priorities:

1. Invite positive people to participate in program
 - a. Target young adults, 30 to 40 years of age, who are invested
 - b. Young adults are busy - listen to what will work best for them
2. Each community and participant takes ownership - it's an honor to be invited!
3. Interaction between communities and people in the region
4. Build awareness about our communities, development projects and opportunities
5. Celebrate what is great about our communities!
6. Keep a record of and encourage projects identified by participants
7. Asset focus!
8. Community tours
 - a. McCook Community College provide bus transportation?
9. History is vital - presentation by host communities, involving youth
10. Need an engaging facilitator, but not imitating Bob Manley's persona

Opportunities to Explore:

1. Use information technology to connect people and share heritage (NDE e-books)
 - a. Regional web page and Facebook site - link to community sites
2. Two year format - Year 1: Training/Capacity Building Year 2: Community Projects
3. Connect existing community leadership programs regionally
4. Develop regional database of topic experts to present their knowledge
5. Supplement 4th grade statehood education with community/regional heritage
6. Invite high school students to participate with young adults
7. Emphasize youth entrepreneurship and opportunities to come home
8. Identify specific career opportunities for youth - especially in trades with shortage
9. Encourage job shadowing to help youth identify local job and business opportunities
10. Identify and match adult mentors in trades with students who want to develop skills
11. Look at Charter School model for connecting education with career opportunities in the region
12. Focus on alumni attraction as a key develop priority
 - a. Host tours - use Prairie Lakes Guide as resource

Implementation Plan:

- a. Fall 2012 kickoff - September, October, November/January. February, March
- b. Secure funding for program and administrative support with two year format
 - i. Local program expenses (facility use, tour buses, perhaps food and beverages)
 - ii. Content expert expenses (honorarium and travel expenses)
 - iii. Program facilitator (host) expenses (Heartland/CRE?)
 - iv. Program administrator expenses (MCC?)
 - v. Small seed fund for community project support by participants?
- c. Former Community Builders invite emerging leaders in target group to participate
 - i. Compile list of all past Community Builders participants
- d. Identify host communities and develop program 2012-13 calendar
 - i. McCook agreed to host first meeting with Bob Manley video
 1. Participants agreed that the smaller towns in the region will support this venue.